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What makes a Good Team?

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Abstract

Created in organizations to solve problems, provide services or create products, teams are seen as mechanisms that enable organizations to efficiently respond to customers demands. When studying team work one observes that at the same time that members are working to a common purpose and objective, each member fosters the achievement of these through their individual contributions.

However, just as too much individuality creates problems, so does too much coesion. In this sense, the importance of achieving a balance, as well as an interrelation between individual contribution and collective work is crucial to enhance team performance.

Key words: Team performance, Personal Contribution

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1- Project Purpose

Ever since individuals have had the necessity to live in society, so as to work in a cooperative and supportive way to more efficiently satisfy their individual and common needs. As proposed by West and his collaborators (1998: Cunha et al, 2004: 350), “A group of people working together to reach common objectives through roles’ differentiation and elaborated communication systems represents a basic element to our species”. They further refer that the present enthusiasm for team work in organizations reflects a deeper recognition that this way of working comprises in it the promise of greater progress than those that can be reached through individual effort or mechanic views of work. In fact supporters of team work claim that organizations should rely on teams to compete (Wageman, 1997: 49) so as to achieve more efficient and creative responses to the demanding environment in which organizations operate nowadays.

Katzenbach and Smith (2005) define a team as: a small number of people with complementary skills, who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable. Observing teams’ dynamics one notices that members have differentiated but interrelated tasks and different knowledge and skills. (Cunha et al, 2004: 346) Consequently, team work appears as a dance where individual and collective works are interlaced to each other. More than simply adding individual results teams’ outputs result from the joint contributions of their members, creating performance levels greater than the sum of all individual parts. (Katzenbach and Smith, 2005)

When observing the results of good performing teams, these constantly satisfy the needs of their clients. These also foster the learning of their members, as well as the creation of mechanisms that enable them to better work collectively (Hackman, 2002: 23). As a result, when managing these teams, the challenge is to create a total performance greater than the sum of all individual bests. As a consequence of synergies’ creations as well as of more complete approaches to problems, leaders have been fostering ways enabling

collective work, as well as joint activities. However, in some circumstances team work does not get done (Hackman, 2002: viii). This is because certain types of work are better performed by members alone, rather than collectively.

As Hackman (Coutu, 2009: 105) claims, leaders should be able to find a balance between individual autonomy and collective action, given that either extreme can be harmful for team work. In his opinion, by being so strong and controlling teams can become so destructive that individual voices, contributions and learning can end up lost. Taking in consideration the structures that Hackman, Katzenbach and Smith propose as enablers of good performance, as well as with the observation of different teams with different levels of performance, this work project seeks to understand how can teams manage individual and collective contributions, and the impact it has on performance.

In this sense, in an attempt of understanding what makes some teams perform better than others, two questions guide this study: How can teams take advantage from the benefits of the collective work, and at the same time enhance the individual contributions of each member? and How do teams foster the development of individual members, and at the same time benefit from their joint contributions?

2- Effective Work Teams

Regarded as places where people can be highly creative and productive, teams have become essential structures that organizations employ to compete. Since the main goal of teams is achieving good performance, it becomes important to understand what defines the good performance of a team. As Hackman claims (2002: 23) good teams are characterized by three important aspects: They always serve their customers well; become increasingly capable performing units over time, as members gain experience and discover new and better ways of working together; and are able to provide settings

in which each individual member can find in his or her team work a good measure of personal learning and fulfilment.

In an attempt of increasing teams' performance, the search for understanding why some teams achieve better results than others has been a hot subject over time.

While Hackman (2002: viii) claims that teams can generate magic but wondrously this is rarely seen (Coutu: 2009), for Katzenbach and Smith (2005) the main problem related to teams is the general wrong employment of this word. In this sense, distinguishing what a team is from what it isn't, these authors explain that teams and good performance are inseparable: You cannot have one without the other.

When trying to explain the necessary conditions for teams to achieve good performance, these authors are covenant about the importance of a good team design. While Hackman (2002, viii-ix) identifies five conditions that foster team effectiveness, stating that despite being few in number, these conditions are great in impact, similarly Katzenbach and Smith (2005) discuss four elements essential for teams' functioning.

Hackman (2002: 31, 44) firstly states the importance of teams being real teams rather than in name only, which means making sure that the work to be done is appropriate for team performance. In this sense it should require members to work together interdependently to achieve an identifiable collective outcome. The same is referred by Katzenbach and Smith (2005) when explaining that by having a common commitment teams become a powerfully unit of collective performance. These authors further refer the importance of teams investing time and effort exploring, shaping and agreeing on a purpose belonging to them both collectively and individually. They also consider that translating this common purpose into specific performance goals that are compelling is a crucial step to let team members feel the sense of collective motivation. Hackman (Coutu, 2009: 103) also advocates this when referring the importance of teams having a Compelling Direction that enables members to know, and agree on, what they are supposed to be doing together.

A great importance is also given to teams' structure. This means making sure teams have the right number of members as well as the right mix of skills. All authors agree that it is a fallacy to state that bigger teams are better than smaller ones (Coutu, 2009: 101; Katzenbach and Smith, 2005). According to a research done by Hackman, the bigger a team is, the greater the number of links needed to be managed among members. As these links grow at an accelerating, almost exponential rate, rather than working as a single unit, it is frequent to observe these teams break into sub teams. (Katzenbach and Smith, 2005) In fact all these authors agree that large numbers of people have trouble interacting constructively, and hardly perform real work together. Regarding composition, the authors agree that a balance between homogeneity and heterogeneity should be found (Hackman, 2002: 128) enabling the gathering of the complementary skills necessary to completely perform the team's job. (Katzenbach and Smith, 2005).

Hackman further refers the importance of a supportive context in the organizations in which teams are inserted, including the reward system, the human resource system, and the information system (Coutu, 2009: 103). Consequently the author believes that these should be adapted so as to motivate team work, rather than individual work. The same perspective is adopted towards coaching. In an attempt of addressing any aspect impeding members' ability to work well together or to strength the team's functioning, this should be translated in a direct intervention with the whole team. From his viewpoint this would help members use their collective resources well in accomplishing their work. (Hackman, 2002: 166-167)

Katzenbach and Smith (2002) also consider important that teams have this sense of collectivity. These authors state that it is crucial for teams to develop strong commitment towards a common approach. When doing this, team members should collectively agree on the specifics of work and how they fit together to integrate individual skills and advance team performance. They further state that a real team

cannot be sustained by delegating work to a few members and relying in reviews and meeting for its only “working together” aspects. In this sense, these authors state that creating mutual accountability is what produces the rich rewards of mutual achievement that all members share.

However, these authors seem less severe than Ruth Wageman (1997: 55) for whom the creation of a task that sometimes requires significant team activity, sometimes significant individual activity prevents a group from investing significant time in learning how to operate effectively together as a team. In fact, even Hackman recognizes the need to find a balance between individual autonomy and collective action referring that “In one management team we studied, for example, being a team player was so strongly valued that individuals self-censored their contributions for fear of disrupting team harmony” (Coutu: 2009, 105). In this sense, the exercise of individuality shows its relevance as well as alignment with what Katzenbach and Smith (2005) consider to be a team. For them it is crucial the existence of a set of values that encourages listening and responding constructively to views expressed by others. They further add that giving others the benefit of the doubt, providing support and recognizing the interests and achievements of the others is in the basis of real collective work.

3- Discussion of the Topic

3.1. Methodology

The research for this Work Project consisted on the study of four teams, working in different sectors of activity and having different levels of performance, but all with the common aspect of being service providers’ teams. A first consideration for the choice of teams was making sure that these worked indeed as a team. For this purpose an informal conversation with one member of the team was held so as to make sure that members

were committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals and approach (Katzenbach and Douglas, 2005: 1) and that different but related tasks were performed by the different members of the team and that these had differentiated levels of knowledge and competences. (Cunha et al, 2004: 346).

Given that the studied teams work in different sectors of activity each team has a structure and employs ways of operating influenced by the type of work and market in which it operates. Despite this, the three criteria referred by Hackman - (1) Consistently met needs of their customers, (2) appeared to be operating with increasing effectiveness over time, and (3) were made up of members who were engaged and satisfied with their work - were employed to assess the effectiveness of each team. (Wageman, 1997: 52) Given that this measure of effectiveness is subjective, when assessing the performance of each team, members' opinions about the team's work and functioning were considered as valuable to consider that a team was good or not.

The teams employed as an object of study to the experimental part of the Work Project were: a lawyers' team, an actuarial team, a therapeutical team and a team of technical assistance to social construction.

The lawyers' team belongs to the Portuguese law firm ABBC, and works in the Intellectual Property, Marketing and TMT areas with the purpose of preparing the bureaucratic aspects concerning trademark registrations, patents and validation models of national and international companies operating in Portugal. The team is composed by eight members, all undergraduate in law: one leader, one of the firm's partners, responsible for the team's coordination, two responsible associates and two associates, and three trainees. The consultancy work that the team makes for each client is divided in tasks among the members of the team according to their availability and experience. These tasks consist on: solicitation's reception, discussion and interpretation, preparation of the solution, report elaboration and delivery to the client.

This was considered as a good performing team as a consequence of being internationally recognized as the best team working in the intellectual property area, and distinguished for its efficient customer service: “We are recognized, that is, there exists an annual ranking, and we are, since I remember, in that ranking. We are number one...”¹ Members are also improving their working methodology in collective work: “I think that one of the things that works well, is in terms of workflow, the way things are organized (...) the members already know what is expected”.² Regarding learning members consider the mixture of generations and the possibility of discussing each solicitation received as a way of learning and gaining more experience in the work they perform.

The actuarial team belongs to MERCER, and works in the Retirement, Risk & Financing consulting area. The team’s purpose is to calculate the responsibilities and costs in which companies, from different European countries, incur for holding a pension program to their employees. The team is composed by fifty members, mostly with mathematics background, coordinated by a team leader. Due to its size it is structured in sub-teams divided by countries. Each sub-team is responsible for two or three countries and has a sub-team leader responsible for the coordination of the different countries. For each country there exists one member responsible for establishing contact with the different companies of that country, and to support the work of the several members intended for the several tasks of the sub-team. A typical sub-team work consists on receiving data from clients and analyzing it to check its regularity. The pensions people will receive when getting retired are then computed in a specific program, and based on that, the team makes a calculation of the costs incurred by the company. After this calculation the team makes an accountability map and a

¹ ABBC interview: page 22, row: 12-13

² ABBC interview: page 12, row: 22 and 28-29

report that is sent to the client. These steps are translated in the different tasks performed by the individual members of the team.

Regarding performance, its members considered this as a good team since it has been increasing due to the increase in demand. This was influenced by the reputation of the team for efficient performance which contributed to attract new clients and make the existent ones satisfied. This efficiency is a consequence of the mechanisms that the team is constantly developing for a better customer service: "... we also develop tools to be more efficient, because we are a service provider team..."³ Members are also considered to be constantly learning and to evolve, not only because of constant coaching activities but also because of the work performed by the team. "This is a dynamic team and a really good place to learn..."⁴

The therapeutical team belongs to *Comunidade Terapeutica do Restelo* (CTR) – a public service belonging to *Instituto da Droga e Toxicodependencia*. CTR provides assistance to drug addicted and alcoholic patients that are in a physical withdrawal phase and thus need psychotherapy and sociotherapy support, under psychiatric supervision. The treatment consists on a structured process composed by different phases. The team is composed by seven members, working together for ten years and with different academic backgrounds: social work, nursing and different areas of psychology. With a far-reaching project, the team's work consists on not only providing psychological monitoring to the community's residents but also to help them manage the community's daily life in an attempt of preparing them to social reinsertion. In this sense each member is not only a therapist and responsible for managing the community's functioning, but also a model of identification to the community's patients. According to the academic background, each member has responsibilities concerning the management of the community's existence. Each member is also

³ MERCER interview: page 9, row: 5-6

⁴ MERCER interview: page 16, row: 13-14

responsible for tasks that can be performed by any member despite his/her academic background: monitoring of small therapeutical groups, supervision of the different housing areas and development of activities for the therapeutical program. There is also a director of the Community, responsible for team's coordination and external representation of the community.

This team is also considered a good performing team due to the results they had been obtaining through the years. Collectively fostering for innovation and adaptation of their program to the reality enabled the development of know how in this area: "... in terms of dynamic, I think we are very mechanized (...) even though working together for a long time, we try not to accommodate. (...) because reality changes, reality is dynamic and so in each moment we need to be constantly finding new approaches, and some solutions employed before are now outdated..."⁵ The different academic backgrounds enable not only a more diversified approach for the problems the team has to deal with, but is also enabling each member to be constantly learning from the experience of working with the team.

Finally, the team of technical assistance to social construction is a team working in *Gabinete de Apoio Técnico* for the Portuguese Social Security. The work of this team is to evaluate future projects located in Lisbon applying for SS funding. The team is composed by ten members: one leader; eight technical assistants with architecture or engineering backgrounds; and one member responsible for processes' administration. Work is organized by the type of funding provided by the Social Security Services. The projects' approval procedure starts with the processes' reception and analysis by the administrative member, which include the project and all the candidates' necessary information. The project is then sent to the team leader that makes the work distribution according to the type of funding to which the projects are applying for. After receiving

⁵ CTR interview: page 15, row: 19, 28 and page 16, rows: 4-6

the projects, each member has to analyze their viability, talk with the institution if necessary and formulate a report explaining whether the project is approved or not. After this analysis the leader receives the information and approves the final report. This is sent to the administrative member that is responsible for sending the information to the respective institution. Even though responding to its clients needs it cannot be considered as satisfying these since in members' opinion "...I think we respond at a quantitative level, but not at a qualitative one". Moreover, working together for more than five years, members have not been developing experience and mechanisms that enable a better performance, as a consequence of the way tasks are divided. Even though discussing with each other issues related to work, members had not been learning with the team work: "there exist members that are constantly coming to my office expecting me to solve their problems. They have a guide with working instructions or they could ask to the other members, but they keep asking me to solve their problems"⁶. As a consequence, this team is considered a bad performing team.

As a way of collecting data about the most relevant aspects concerning the team functioning, a semi-structured interview was made to three elements of each team. (an example of the guide of interviews is provided in exhibit 1) In total, twelve interviews with duration of approximately twenty minutes each were made.

Each interview was correctly recorded and then retranscribed in its integrity so as to be analyzed and coded. This analysis was made following a content analysis approach, in which different categories were defined and then analyzed in light of the importance of these categories to the performance of teams and yet interrelated to each other. After this individual analysis a comparison of the four teams was made, finding the common aspects among the teams, and those that differentiated the performance of the different teams.

⁶ GATT interview: page 24, rows 19, 20, 21 and 22

3.2 - Findings: Basic Structures for team work

When asked what was more efficient, team work or individual work, all members of all teams belonging to this study were covenant that team work was without a doubt more efficient. However, this efficiency of team work was dependent on tasks' division, since all members agreed that efficiency was lost when tasks were performed by more than one member at the same time. For instance, as referred by one ABBC's member: "There are lawyers that like to do all the work together, "step-by-step". It is also possible, and all the matters are analyzed with more precision. But at the same time, there is a loss of efficiency and quickness of response that ends up penalizing the client..."⁷

In this sense, several common aspects were observed in both good and bad performing teams, working as structures sustaining both collective work and the possibility of having distinct but interrelated tasks performed at the same time by different members.

However, the fact of being present on either good or bad performing teams makes the existence of these structures not sufficient to explain the good performance of certain teams. In order to enhance teams' performance, it was observed that these structures are dependent on certain characteristics, existent only in the good performing teams. The way these characteristics enable the creation of links between individual and collective work influences these structures, making possible the distinction between good and bad performing teams.

The referred structures necessary for a team to function as intended consist on conceptual variables in which academic studies have already put a great focus when explaining team work, and consist on: Goals and Tasks, Communication, Leadership Roles and Patterns.

These four variables were considered as the more relevant since they establish a bridge between individual work and collective work, enabling members to understand that

⁷ ABBC interview, page 15, rows: 28, 29 and 30 Page 16 rows1, 2 and 3

even though performing tasks alone, they are contributing to the achievement of the team's common goal. Consequently, even though performing individual tasks, members do not lose sight of the sense of team. Even though performing individual tasks, members do not act as isolated members, but as team members performing tasks alone given the efficiency of dividing tasks among the members of the team.

i) Goals and Tasks

The existence of a common goal is what grants teams with a Compelling Direction that orients team members' attention and actions (Hackman, 2002: 63). The members of the teams belonging to this study are not an exception and in all the teams the existence of a common goal translated in tasks that enable its achievement, is observable: "with defined goals, people are more motivated because they have to accomplish those goals, and know where they must go."⁸

The way these goals and tasks are divided in individual goals and tasks, plays an important role in individual motivation and productivity, enabling members to understand the importance of their individual contributions for the accomplishment of the team's tasks. In this sense, the division of the collective task in individual tasks that members of the team perform alone, being conferred with individual goals that together reach the common goal is essential and a common aspect present in the studied teams.

Observing the individual tasks of the good performing teams, these are interdependent tasks, where the execution of each task is essential for the execution of the others. For instance in ABBC, the lawyers' team essentially does consultancy work: "We receive clients' solicitations, normally via e-mail, then someone analyses them, another person is focused on the resolution of the problem, and then someone prepares the response to

⁸ MERCER interview: page 13, rows 30 and 31

the clients.”⁹ It is then observable that each member of the team is conferred with an individual responsibility, but at the same time he feels how much the team’s work is dependent on his own task since each one is crucial for the preparation of the clients’ requests. The more teams are able to create this, the more effective will individual tasks be, and more efficiently will the common work will be made.

Even though created as a function of a common task, in GAT the fact that individual tasks were not created so as to be interdependent on other tasks, makes the individual performance of each member much lower than that existent on the good performing teams. In fact the structure only implies a team work between the administrative responsible, the leader and each individual technical. As referred by one team member, this creates the possibility of isolation of each technical, creating a barrier to a possible learning among members: “Sometimes isolation happens because not all the work is to be developed by the team, there are lots of individual work, and as a consequence the members end up a bit isolated from one another.”¹⁰

A first conclusion about the essential interaction between individual and collective work to the efficiency of Tasks and Goals is then observed: the Division of common work in individual work is crucial, not only to achieve individual motivation but also to enable a more efficient execution of tasks. However, the more the individual tasks are connected to each other, the more individuals will feel the need to cooperate since collective goals will only be achieved with the execution of all individual goals. This creates the sense of the existence of “a project that the team constructs, updates and that is dynamic. The great advantage of working with a team is this idea of a common project. It is like having a painting where everything is developed, and to which everyone one contributes. This is what distinguishes a team from a group.”¹¹

⁹ ABBC Interview: page 11, rows 8 to 13

¹⁰ GAT interview: page 8, rows 9, 10 and 11

¹¹ CTR interview: page 11, rows 9 to 12

ii) Communication

Another important structure is Communication. As a way of achieving an effective communication, in the teams studied meetings and explanatory communication take an important role. Both enable a communication comprehending all members of the team as well as the participation of all team members in team's decisions.

The good performing teams organize frequent meetings. Meetings are an occasion where issues concerning the team are transmitted to all individual members and, at the same time, issues concerning the individual work and opinion of each member are communicated to the whole team: "There exists a weekly meeting, where issues are discussed; where the work is distributed, and members discuss issues, from the eldest to the youngest lawyer. Each member participates as he wants and shares his opinions without any problem."¹² As a way of getting the direction right and to foster the acceptance by all members, in both ABBC and CTR teams, consultation with all team members is done through the organization of weekly meetings. Concerning MERCER this team organizes three formal meetings each year, and base their communication in current contact between the members of the team and their leaders. "I normally start my working day by helping those that report to me, to clarify any doubt..."¹³

Meetings also enable the alignment of all members' actions, since each member is able to communicate to the whole team the activities he/she performed making possible the existence of a constant adaptation of members' actions, when necessary. As in the case of CTR where to make sure that all members are constantly updating each other with relevant events that might influence their activity; "after each therapeutical group there is a moment where we tell the others what happened (...) Because there are many things happening both inside and outside therapeutical groups, such as a family calling, a

¹² ABBC interview: page 23, row 12-14

¹³ MERCER interview: page 2, row 8

resident that did something...”¹⁴, and members need this constant update so as to have a coherent and aligned activity.

Another relevant aspect concerns the importance that good teams attribute to the role of explanatory communication – a communication where rather than only transmitted, information is also explained as well as discussed with all team members. Since each team member is provided with a certain degree of autonomy to perform his assigned tasks, an explanatory communication, enables each member to know the type of decisions and actions he/she is allowed to take individually. It also enables members to deeply understand their contribution to the team’s common purpose, giving them the opportunity to share their ideas and participate in teams’ decisions: “Whenever there is a strategic decision she (referring to the team leader) explains everyone why we are doing things that way, and to where we must go, and what our goals are. People are not working without knowing where to go”¹⁵. Given that this explanatory communication enables individuals to deeply understand important decisions and information, it will enable them to question and agree with these. “In this team decisions are not taken without the approval of everyone. We are constantly trying to take decisions with which everyone agrees. Off course this difficults our work, but is something I surely admire”¹⁶

Regarding GAT, there exist several problems concerning communication due to the non existence of regular meetings as well as of tasks’ explanation. When allocating tasks to each team member, the leader does it by e-mail, and makes an automatic distribution only regarding the type of financing project to which each member belongs.

In this sense, the lack of spaces where communication is done at one time to all team members, as well as where each individual member can communicate his work to the rest of the team, is one of the main reasons that influences the difficulty of creating mechanisms that members can collectively apply to their work. This is also the reason

¹⁴ CTR interview: page 24, row 10-13

¹⁵ MERCER interview: page 18, row 21-24

¹⁶ CTR interview: page 20, rows 10 to 13

why the members of this team do not learn with the work of each other - since they only share ideas in particular situations.

As observed, in good teams the existence of mechanisms such as meetings and explanatory communication not only make sure that communication comprehends each individual member and consequently the whole team, but also that each individual member is able to attain the whole team and as a result enhance team's performance.

iii) Leadership Roles

In all the teams studied, there exists the presence of one or more members assuming leadership roles. Even though the contributions of every team member are important and crucial for team's decisions, there usually exists one or more members with more responsibility that guide the work of the team. Consequently, the existence of leadership roles is crucial for the possibility of enabling that when performing individual tasks, members are coordinated with others, as well as when working together, individuals have someone to set a direction and avoid hindrance: "even though all members participate in the decision making process, Dr. César (the team leader) is the one who has the final decision"¹⁷.

In the studied teams leadership is related to coordination, control, and responsibility for the team's functioning and planning. Despite having more power to set directions and take the final decisions, in the good teams studied, leaders delegate almost all the work to the team members. This delegation enables the leader to better focus on the issues of coordination, planning and control, issues that require more decision power.

This implies the consideration of an important aspect. In the good teams, delegation and autonomy become interrelated. At the same time that leaders' delegation is enabling members to be autonomous, it is also the possibility of having autonomous members that enables team leaders to delegate tasks. In the case of ABBC and MERCER, the

¹⁷ ABBC interview: page 25, rows 11 and 12

leaders delegate tasks, while concentrating on the technical aspects of the team functioning. In ABBC there exists “Dr. Cesar exercising coordination functions, more than anything else”¹⁸ and in MERCER where exists “Nélia who controls the fifty members of the team”.¹⁹ In this sense, leadership is distributed, ensuring a more close and specific coordination of members. Moreover, there exists a delegation of responsibilities from the top to the bottom according to the experience of each member, creating a hierarchical structure based on experience: “There does not exist a hierarchical structure in this team, but what we call a *chain of experience*, and tasks are distributed according to their degree of complexity.”²⁰

In MERCER adding to the leader, “each sub-team has a team leader, someone with more experience that is responsible for a group of countries. Then there exists a responsible for the management of each country.”²¹

In ABBC, the called “responsible associates also make part of a decision structure”.²² Contrarily to what would happen if leadership was all in the hands of one member only, the existence of this “delegation of responsibilities” enables “members to be more involved in the decisions.”²³ Even though not all members are given roles of team leadership, the fact of working close to someone with a greater responsibility for the team functioning, makes them feel these responsibilities more deeply and closer to decision power. Moreover, those with responsibilities also have to spend more time with coordination aspects, consequently delegating more tasks to those for whom they are responsible.

In the case of CTR, members are “trained to be autonomous”²⁴ so as to be given more responsibility and capacity to participate on team’s decisions, enabling the member with leadership roles to concentrate on basic team’s management and external representation.

¹⁸ ABBC interview: page 2, row 18-19

¹⁹ MERCER interview: page 7, row 5-6

²⁰ ABBC interview: page 20, rows 17, 18, 21 and 22

²¹ MERCER interview: page 7, rows 15 to 16, 18 to 19 and 24 to 26

²² ABBC interview: page 15, row 10-11

²³ ABBC interview: page 25, row 15

²⁴ CTR interview: page2, row 29-30

On the contrary, in GAT as members are less autonomous it is impossible for the leader to delegate responsibilities and focus mostly on issues related to the team's functioning, coordination and planning: "the machine can't stop, and that machine takes us the most part of our day, thus the planning, and more than that, the management would require me to spend half of a day every day. And that is only made in last instance"²⁵. It also causes demotivation, since members do not feel any responsibility for their work or closeness to decision making. It also creates even more resistance to delegation. "There exists one member for instance, to whom I could delegate some responsibilities, but he does not want, because more responsibility requires more work." In this sense it is observable that the leader, with the main task of coordinating and planning the team's activities, when delegating tasks, will have an impact on performance as well as on motivation, since it will create a better sense of commitment among the members of the team. It is this generalized responsibility that will enable the functioning of the working mechanisms: "the way tasks are divided and the way work is delegated works very well and enables the team to be constantly in activity"²⁶. In this sense, one understands that through delegation, not only is the leader incorporating in each individual member a greater sense of responsibility, but also empowering the whole team, enabling a more generalized dependability for the team's outcomes. "Each Project has several phases, and each person is delegated with the responsibilities on that phase. But since everyone has responsibilities, even though tasks are divided when something goes wrong it is the team who responds."²⁷ Consequently not only members feel the importance of the team's achievements for their personal work, but also recognize the importance of their work to the team's performance.

²⁵ GAT interview: 24, page, row 5-7

²⁶ ABBC interview: page 12, rows 21 to 24

²⁷ MERCER interview: page 4, rows 13 to 15

iv) Patterns

Due to the intense work together, in the teams studied the existence of patterns that guided teams' functioning and members' behaviours was also observed. These patterns were referred by all team members of MERCER, ABBC and CTR as crucial pillars of functioning to which members adapt and, without questioning, follow as good rules of behaviour.

The main patterns observed in these teams were: good relationships, trust, respect and flexibility.

For team members, the existence of good relationships between the members of the team is important since "I think that the fact that the non existence of formality in the relationship between members makes people to be more cosy in the workplace".²⁸

Seeking in these relationships a way of learning and being secure to ask their colleagues any help they need, for the members of the good teams security is what enables a better work. This is explained by the fact that "a good environment is often propitious to a faster work, a work with more quality, and consequently a work with better results."²⁹

Another important aspect is trust. Trust enables the possibility of each member to be autonomous, since everyone knows the ability of others to achieve good results and thus respect their work: "The thing I most admire in this team is trust, people have common values, and trust creates empathy, and that is very important for people to feel good in the team."³⁰ "There exists a respect for the work of the others, if someone has a certain competence and knows how to do things, well then his work is respected."³¹

With this, the pattern concerning respect also arises. As in the case of CTR and ABBC where members made powerful statements as: "this team values a lot the respect for each individual"³² and "In our team we promote a lot the respect for the others. We are

²⁸ ABBC interview: page 13, row 21-24

²⁹ MERCER interview: page 12, rows 6 to 12

³⁰ ABBC interview: page 3, rows 17 to 19

³¹ ABBC interview: page 4 rows 19 to 21

³² CTR interview: page 21, rows 9 and 10

all aware that each colleague deserves respect, because each member is a person with good and bad days.”³³ At the same time that it enables each individual task to be considered as valuable, respect also makes possible members’ participation since these know that their opinions, when valuable, will be considered and applied for team work: “The capacity of respecting, but at the same time listening, giving opinions and consider others opinions as something that adds value, is very important”.³⁴

Another important pattern is flexibility. Flexibility is what grants teams with “The capacity to adapt to new demands and to the new reality”³⁵, making it possible not to stop when something unexpected happens. It also enables teams to adapt to the dynamic reality in which it operates and be able to respond to the market demands that are constantly changing: “One thing that works really well in this team is people’s flexibility. Normally we try to plan everything, but then nothing happens as predicted so people need to be flexible to pass through these critical moments.”

In this sense, members in their individuality play an important role in patterns, since their effectiveness depends on its general acceptance by all the members of the team. Their strong establishment makes individuals observe and act accordingly, without questioning their existence, in an attempt to seek harmony. However, as humans are not machines, this possibility of all members to agree with these patterns and be willing to follow them also depends on each individual’s predisposition to act like that, as well as on the existence of a good leader that motivates their practice. When observing these patterns, each individual member adapts to them in a way coherent to his/her beliefs, personality and character, so as to naturally express them in his/her behaviours.

In fact, when talking about the importance of the existence of coordination on her team, one of the members of MERCER referred: “our boss has always encouraged us to be coordinated. But on the other hand, it is also due to the fact that people here have a

³³ ABBC interview: page 24, rows 8 to 10

³⁴ ABBC interview: page 4, row 20-23

³⁵ CTR interview: page 20, row 27-28

predisposition to be coordinated”³⁶. And in the case of ABBC when one of the members refers that people respect each other, even though this is a result of the already referred promotion for respect, “then we all worry about looking for each member as a person”. In the good teams, both this generalized and individual acceptance happened, as team members were covenant on the existence of these patterns. Furthermore, the existence of the four referred patterns were the aspects referred as the most admired by team members, or considered as more responsible for team’s good performance. These were the main aspects that at the same time that enabled teams to have a good performance while working with mechanisms sustained by tasks’ division, contributed more to the creation of a sense of commitment as well as of collectivity. In this sense, at the same time that these patterns are important to encourage each individual member to perform his best, these are also contributing for the creation of common commitment and mutual accountability.

For a brief understanding of the basic structures of team work presented, as well as the way these establish a connection between individual work and collective work, a table is presented.

³⁶ MERCER interview: page 10, row 18-20

Table

Variables	Characteristics	<div>Individual Work</div> <div>Collective Work</div>
Goals and Tasks	<div>Common</div> <div>Individual</div>	<p>Existence of a common goal translated in a task: accomplishment of a common purpose - compelling</p> <p>Common goals divided in Interdependent Individual Goals and Tasks: Enables Process Efficiency and Members feel individual motivation</p>
Communication	<div>Explanatory Communication</div> <div>Meetings</div>	<p>Vehicles of communication that enable:</p> <p>Transmission of what is collective to each individual</p> <p>Individual transmission of ideas, opinions, and contributions to the whole team</p>
Leadership Roles	<div>Delegation</div> <div>Distributed Leadership</div>	<p>Delegation and Distributed Leadership turn decision structures closer to team members</p> <p>Increase individual responsibility</p> <p>Empowerment of the whole team</p>
Patterns	<div>Good Relationships</div> <div>Trust</div> <div>Respect</div> <div>Flexibility</div>	<p>Crucial Pillars of functioning strongly established</p> <p>Generalized existence but well accepted by each individual member</p> <p>Enable that at the same time that each member is performing an individual task - crucial for the accomplishment of the common goal - team members become powerful units of collective action</p> <p>Encourage each individual member to perform his best and create common commitment and mutual accountability</p>

4 - Conclusion

When observing the structure, mechanisms and working dynamics in teams, the first aspect one notices is the well defined division of tasks.

In all the teams, ABBC, GAT, MERCER and CTR, in an attempt of better satisfying customers' demands, tasks were divided according to the specificities of work. This division not only enables the team to develop a specialized work due to the interest with which each member performs his/her task but it also enables that different tasks are being performed at the same time. This allows a faster and more efficient resolution of problems or service provision.

However while performing individual tasks it is important that members do not forget that they are working for a team. In this sense, despite the importance of the creation of common goals and objectives that members accurately seek to achieve through their individual contributions, a constant interaction and interrelation between members is needed. With the creation of mechanisms that naturally and transparently enable the team to perform a choreography switching from what is individual to what is collective, as well as from what is collective to what is individual, enables an efficient work.

As presented in this work, this choreography is transversal to four common structures: Goals and Tasks, Communication, Leadership and Patterns.

Not only do these structures enable teams to find a balance between autonomy and collective work, but these also let the two variables to be constantly influencing each other, contributing one for the value created by the other.

The main aspect observed in this study is that, through the management of individual and collective work, the good performing teams find in its more valuable resources, their members, not only a way of fostering good performance, but also a way of improving their performance. Consequently, at the same time that they are taking advantage from the benefits of collective work, teams are also enhancing the contributions of individual members.

Since members are those that create the work the team does, the possibility of letting them contribute to that work is important as a way of approaching problems in a more complete way, as well as performing the different activities a team work demands. Furthermore, this possibility of having all members in constant contact creates the possibility of members learning with each other improving the team's potential.

In this sense it is understandable that this interaction between individual and collective work becomes a powerful structure that teams should take care and advantage of.

Not only does this constant interaction between members, as well as the promotion of values and ways of working together enables a good performance, but it also fosters the development of the individuals that make part of the team. Consequently, teams are able to foster the development of individual members and at the same time benefit from their joint contributions. When correctly committed to it the individuals will canalize their development for the team's good sake. This will create a spiral effect that, as already mentioned, not only will enable teams to have a good performance, but also will enhance their good performance.

In fact, this is the case of ABBC, MERCER and CTR, the good performing teams belonging to this study.

Given that the sample of study for the research of this work project was limited, and only included four teams, it is important to understand that these conclusions only seek to be applied to these cases, as more general conclusions would imply a larger sample.

Despite applying the three criteria referred by Hackman to differentiate the good from the bad performing teams, no conclusion could be taken about the differences in performance of the good teams. This is justified by the fact that teams belong to different sectors of activity.

5- References

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Exhibit 1 – Interview Guide

- 1) Quando entrou para a equipa qual era a imagem que tinha desta?
- 2) Pode descrever-me alguns momentos/eventos cruciais/criticos que talvez tenham influenciado a equipa?

Exemplo: decisões da propria equipa ou da empresa que tenham influenciado a equipa

- 3) Pode fazer-me uma descrição da equipa? (actualmente, funcionamento, o que fazem, estrutura...) (evolução da equipa)
- 4) Que tarefas fazem em conjunto? Que tarefas fazem separados?
- 5) Pode descrever-me um dia normal de trabalho?
- 6) O que é que mais admira na sua equipa? O que é que gosta menos na sua equipa?
- 7) O que é que funciona melhor na sua equipa? (o que funciona melhor é o que leva a equipa a ter um bom desempenho?) O que é que funciona pior?
- 8) Mudaria alguma coisa na sua equipa? O quê?
- 9) Na sua opinião o que distingue a sua equipa de outras? (alguma equipa em que já tenha trabalhado, ou outra equipa de que tenha conhecimento)
- 10) Como descreve a comunicação dentro da equipa? E com o exterior?
- 11) Como descreve o relacionamento entre os membros da equipa?
- 12) Quanto ao planeamento de actividades existe algum? Como funciona? Quem define?
- 13) Com a experiencia que tem o que acha mais eficiente, o trabalho em equipa ou o trabalho feito individualmente?
- 14) Quais considera serem as vantagens do trabalho em equipa? E as desvantagens?
- 15) Considera que o trabalho em equipa cria algum tipo de situação menos justa?
- 16) Qual foi a melhor equipa em que já trabalhou? Porquê?
- 17) Como descreveria a equipa ideal?